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SUBJECT: CODEL TAUSCHER'S APRIL 9 MEETING WITH FOREIGN  
MINISTER ABOUL GHEIT

REF: CAIRO 615

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Matthew Tueller for  
reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Key Points:

-- Israel: Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit said that Egypt has a long-standing relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and can work with him, in contrast to new Israeli Foreign Minister Leiberman, whom Aboul Gheit labeled a "problem."

--Aboul Gheit does not see the new Israeli Government as supportive of the peace process and does not anticipate progress.

-- Palestinians: Despite three months of Egyptian mediated talks between Fatah and Hamas, Aboul Gheit was pessimistic about the prospects for Palestinian reconciliation.

-- Iran/Nuclear Proliferation: Even if the U.S. engages directly with Iran, Aboul Gheit does not believe Iran will give up its nuclear weapons program.

12. (C) On April 9, Representatives Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Michael Turner (R-OH), Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), Trent Franks (R-AZ), and Parker Griffith (D-AL) met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit at the Foreign Ministry in Cairo. The Deputy Chief of Mission, three professional House staffers and an Embassy notetaker accompanied the delegation.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs Naela Gabr, Cabinet Advisor and Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossam Zaki, and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for North American Affairs Amin Meleika accompanied Aboul Gheit.

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Israel's New Government  
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13. (C) Aboul Gheit opened with a discussion of the new Israeli government. On Prime Minister Netanyahu, Aboul Gheit said the GoE "knows him well" and will be able to work with him. According to Aboul Gheit, Netanyahu rejects the idea of a two-state solution and views the Palestinian issue as a humanitarian one. Rather than focusing on a political solution, Netanyahu focuses on improving the lives of Palestinians, while at the same time continuing settlement activity. Aboul Gheit said that Netanyahu's approach is unacceptable to the Palestinians, the Arab world and the international community, including the United States, and will "not lead to progress." Aboul Gheit said he does not expect a breakthrough in the peace process with the current Israeli government and, moreover, Israeli society is not yet convinced that peace "is necessary."

14. (C) Aboul Gheit said that recently appointed Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Leiberman is "a problem." According to Aboul Gheit, Leiberman has publicly labeled the peace process "dead," said that if Mubarak would not visit Israel he "could go to hell," and threatened to "bomb" the High Dam at Aswan, flooding Egypt. Aboul Gheit said Leiberman's

behavior is unacceptable and he will not meet with him. If he were to do so, he would be "torn to pieces" by the Egyptian press and public.

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Palestinian Reconciliation  
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15. (C) According to Aboul Gheit and Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossam Zaki who also addressed the issue, the differences between the Palestinian factions are "intractable." Fatah and Hamas share a vision of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, but Hamas wants more and believes armed struggle is more effective than negotiations. Aboul Gheit said that although talks between Fatah and Hamas have been ongoing in Cairo for three months, little has been achieved. Three issues are under discussion: the formation of an interim Palestinian government, followed by Palestinian elections in 2010; the design of an electoral system that will be used to select a permanent Palestinian government; and the restructuring of Palestinian security services. Aboul Gheit said there has been some progress on the formation of an interim government, although Fatah and Hamas disagree on whether the interim government should have a political role, the approach favored by Fatah, or would merely be a caretaker government, Hamas' preference. On the issues of selecting an electoral system and restructuring the security services, Aboul Gheit said there has been no progress. Aboul Gheit said this lack of progress is encouraging the "interference" of outsiders - Iran and Qatar.

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Iran and Nuclear Proliferation  
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16. (C) Aboul Gheit speculated that the new U.S. Administration will engage with Iran, but will be disappointed in late 2009 or early 2010 when it realizes that Iran will not stop its enrichment activities. Aboul Gheit believes Israel may then attack Iran. According to Aboul Gheit, the "intransigence" of Israel and Iran will place the U.S. in an awkward position with the Islamic world. Aboul Gheit said the only real solution is a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, which would require Israel to give up its nuclear weapons. He said that while the U.S. may not perceive a nuclear-armed Israel as a threat, it is so perceived throughout the Middle East. If the U.S. pushed Israel to renounce nuclear weapons, the U.S. would be in a much stronger position to demand that Iran end its nuclear program.

17. (U) CODEL Tauscher did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before departure.

SCOBAY